

WATER BANKING
2010 GENERAL SESSION
STATE OF UTAH

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill allows the creation of a water management authority, which may manage certain water rights in an area governed by a groundwater management plan.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- ▶ defines "water management authority";
- ▶ allows a county or interlocal entity to establish a water management authority in an area governed by a groundwater management plan;
- ▶ provides for the lease, purchase, holding, or control of water rights by a water management authority;
- ▶ allows a water management authority to file a water right change application;
- ▶ addresses the relation of forfeiture provisions to water rights held by a water management authority;
- ▶ requires an annual report by a water management authority; and
- ▶ makes technical changes.

Monies Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

73-5-15, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2009, Chapter 388

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section **73-5-15** is amended to read:

73-5-15. Groundwater management plan -- Water management authority.

(1) As used in this section:

(a) "Critical management area" means a groundwater basin in which the groundwater withdrawals consistently exceed the safe yield.

(b) "Safe yield" means the amount of groundwater that can be withdrawn from a groundwater basin over a period of time without exceeding the long-term recharge of the basin or unreasonably affecting the basin's physical and chemical integrity.

(c) "Water management authority" means an entity created in accordance with this section to manage the use of water rights over which it has the contractual or other right to exercise control, whether by leasing, purchasing, conserving, or otherwise determining the use of the water under the water right.

(2) (a) The state engineer may regulate groundwater withdrawals within a specific groundwater basin by adopting a groundwater management plan in accordance with this section for any groundwater basin or aquifer or combination of hydrologically connected groundwater basins or aquifers.

(b) The objectives of a groundwater management plan are to:

(i) limit groundwater withdrawals to safe yield;

(ii) protect the physical integrity of the aquifer; and

(iii) protect water quality.

(c) The state engineer shall adopt a groundwater management plan for a groundwater basin if more than 1/3 of the water right owners in the groundwater basin request that the state engineer adopt a groundwater management plan.

(3) (a) In developing a groundwater management plan, the state engineer may consider:

(i) the hydrology of the groundwater basin;

(ii) the physical characteristics of the groundwater basin;

(iii) the relationship between surface water and groundwater, including whether the groundwater should be managed in conjunction with hydrologically connected surface waters;

(iv) the geographic spacing and location of groundwater withdrawals;

(v) water quality;

(vi) local well interference; and

(vii) other relevant factors.

(b) The state engineer shall base the provisions of a groundwater management plan on the principles of prior appropriation.

(c) (i) The state engineer shall use the best available scientific method to determine safe yield.

(ii) As hydrologic conditions change or additional information becomes available, safe yield determinations made by the state engineer may be revised by following the procedures listed in Subsection (5).

(4) (a) (i) Except as provided in Subsection (4)(b), the withdrawal of water from a groundwater basin shall be limited to the basin's safe yield.

(ii) Before limiting withdrawals in a groundwater basin to safe yield, the state engineer shall:

(A) determine the groundwater basin's safe yield; and

(B) adopt a groundwater management plan for the groundwater basin.

(iii) If the state engineer determines that groundwater withdrawals in a groundwater basin exceed the safe yield, the state engineer shall regulate groundwater rights in that groundwater basin based on the priority date of the water rights under the groundwater management plan, unless a voluntary arrangement exists under Subsection (4)(c) that requires a different distribution or a water management authority holds certain water rights for nonuse.

(b) When adopting a groundwater management plan for a critical management area, the state engineer shall, based on economic and other impacts to an individual water user or a local community caused by the implementation of safe yield limits on withdrawals, allow gradual implementation of the groundwater management plan.

(c) (i) In consultation with the state engineer, water users in a groundwater basin may agree to participate in a voluntary arrangement for managing withdrawals at any time, either before or after a determination that groundwater withdrawals exceed the groundwater basin's safe yield.

(ii) A voluntary arrangement under Subsection (4)(c)(i) shall be consistent with other law.

(iii) The adoption of a voluntary arrangement under this Subsection (4)(c) by less than all of the water users in a groundwater basin does not affect the rights of water users who do not agree to the voluntary arrangement.

(5) To adopt a groundwater management plan, the state engineer shall:

(a) give notice as specified in Subsection (7) at least 30 days before the first public

meeting held in accordance with Subsection (5)(b):

(i) that the state engineer proposes to adopt a groundwater management plan;

(ii) describing generally the land area proposed to be included in the groundwater management plan; and

(iii) stating the location, date, and time of each public meeting to be held in accordance with Subsection (5)(b);

(b) hold one or more public meetings in the geographic area proposed to be included within the groundwater management plan to:

(i) address the need for a groundwater management plan;

(ii) present any data, studies, or reports that the state engineer intends to consider in preparing the groundwater management plan;

(iii) address safe yield and any other subject that may be included in the groundwater management plan;

(iv) outline the estimated administrative costs, if any, that groundwater users are likely to incur if the plan is adopted; and

(v) receive any public comments and other information presented at the public meeting, including comments from any of the entities listed in Subsection (7)(a)(iii);

(c) receive and consider written comments concerning the proposed groundwater management plan from any person for a period determined by the state engineer of not less than 60 days after the day on which the notice required by Subsection (5)(a) is given;

(d) (i) at least 60 days [~~prior to~~] before final adoption of the groundwater management plan, publish notice:

(A) that a draft of the groundwater management plan [~~has been~~] is proposed; and

(B) specifying where a copy of the draft plan may be reviewed; and

(ii) promptly provide a copy of the draft plan in printed or electronic form to each of the entities listed in Subsection (7)(a)(iii) that makes written request for a copy; and

(e) provide notice of the adoption of the groundwater management plan.

(6) A groundwater management plan [~~shall become~~] becomes effective on the date notice of adoption is completed under Subsection (7), or on a later date if specified in the plan.

(7) (a) A notice required by this section shall be:

(i) published:

(A) once a week for two successive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation in each county that encompasses a portion of the land area proposed to be included within the groundwater management plan; and

(B) in accordance with Section 45-1-101 for two weeks;

(ii) published conspicuously on the state engineer's Internet website; and

(iii) mailed to each of the following that has within its boundaries a portion of the land area to be included within the proposed groundwater management plan:

(A) county;

(B) incorporated city or town;

(C) improvement district under Title 17B, Chapter 2a, Part 4, Improvement District Act;

(D) service area, under Title 17B, Chapter 2a, Part 9, Service Area Act;

(E) drainage district, under Title 17B, Chapter 2a, Part 2, Drainage District Act;

(F) irrigation district, under Title 17B, Chapter 2a, Part 5, Irrigation District Act;

(G) metropolitan water district, under Title 17B, Chapter 2a, Part 6, Metropolitan Water District Act;

(H) special service district providing water, sewer, drainage, or flood control services, under Title 17D, Chapter 1, Special Service District Act;

(I) water conservancy district, under Title 17B, Chapter 2a, Part 10, Water Conservancy District Act; ~~and~~

(J) conservation district, under Title 17D, Chapter 3, Conservation District Act~~[-];~~ and

(K) water management authority, under this section.

(b) A notice required by this section is effective upon substantial compliance with Subsections (7)(a)(i) through (iii).

(8) A groundwater management plan may be amended in the same manner as a groundwater management plan may be adopted under this section.

(9) The existence of a groundwater management plan does not preclude any otherwise eligible person from filing any application or challenging any decision made by the state engineer within the affected groundwater basin.

(10) (a) A person aggrieved by a groundwater management plan may challenge any aspect of the groundwater management plan by filing a complaint within 60 days after the

157 adoption of the groundwater management plan in the district court for any county in which the
158 groundwater basin is found.

159 (b) Notwithstanding Subsection (9), a person may challenge the components of a
160 groundwater management plan only in the manner provided by Subsection (10)(a).

161 (c) An action brought under this Subsection (10) is reviewed de novo by the district
162 court.

163 (d) A person challenging a groundwater management plan under this Subsection (10)
164 shall join the state engineer as a defendant in the action challenging the groundwater
165 management plan.

166 (e) (i) Within 30 days after the day on which a person files an action challenging any
167 aspect of a groundwater management plan under Subsection (10)(a), the person filing the action
168 shall publish notice of the action:

169 (A) in a newspaper of general circulation in the county in which the district court is
170 located; and

171 (B) in accordance with Section 45-1-101 for two weeks.

172 (ii) The notice required by Subsection (10)(e)(i)(A) shall be published once a week for
173 two consecutive weeks.

174 (iii) The notice required by Subsection (10)(e)(i) shall:

175 (A) identify the groundwater management plan the person is challenging;

176 (B) identify the case number assigned by the district court;

177 (C) state that a person affected by the groundwater management plan may petition the
178 district court to intervene in the action challenging the groundwater management plan; and

179 (D) list the address for the clerk of the district court in which the action is filed.

180 (iv) (A) Any person affected by the groundwater management plan may petition to
181 intervene in the action within 60 days after the day on which notice is last published under
182 Subsections (10)(e)(i) and (ii).

183 (B) The district court's treatment of a petition to intervene under this Subsection
184 (10)(e)(iv) is governed by the Utah Rules of Civil Procedure.

185 (v) A district court in which an action is brought under Subsection (10)(a) shall
186 consolidate all actions brought under that Subsection and include in the consolidated action any
187 person whose petition to intervene is granted.

(11) A groundwater management plan adopted or amended in accordance with this section is exempt from the requirements in Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act.

(12) Recharge and recovery projects permitted under Chapter 3b, Groundwater Recharge and Recovery Act, are exempted from this section.

(13) Nothing in this section may be interpreted to require the development, implementation, or consideration of a groundwater management plan as a prerequisite or condition to the exercise of the state engineer's enforcement powers under other law, including powers granted under Section 73-2-25.

(14) A groundwater management plan adopted in accordance with this section may not apply to the dewatering of a mine.

(15) (a) A groundwater management plan adopted by the state engineer before May 1, 2006, remains in force and has the same legal effect as it had on the day on which it was adopted by the state engineer.

(b) If a groundwater management plan that existed before May 1, 2006, is amended on or after May 1, 2006, the amendment is subject to this section's provisions.

(16) If the state engineer adopts a groundwater management plan in accordance with this section, the following entities may create a water management authority:

(a) a county, any portion of which includes territory subject to a groundwater management plan; or

(b) an interlocal entity created in accordance with Title 11, Chapter 13, Interlocal Cooperation Act, if formed by more than one county, each of which includes territory subject to a groundwater management plan.

(17) A water management authority may be used to facilitate the use, lease, sale, or conservation of a water right in accordance with this section.

(18) A water management authority created under this section may do the following within the area covered by the groundwater management plan, subject to any contractual limitation and applicable law governing the appropriation of water:

(a) lease, purchase, manage, or otherwise administer a valid water right;

(b) manage the use of water rights held or administered by the water management authority; and

(c) file an application to change a point of diversion, place of use, or purpose of use concerning a water right in the water management authority's control.

(19) A water management authority shall comply with the requirements of the groundwater management plan.

(20) A water right transferred in a manner that does not result in a permanent divestiture of the water right by the transferor shall continue to be titled in the name of the transferor, unless otherwise determined by contract.

(21) (a) A water right leased, purchased, managed, or administered by a water management authority is not subject to the forfeiture provisions of Section 73-1-4 if:

(i) the water right is made available for lease within three years after the day on which the water management authority obtains an interest in the water right; or

(ii) the water right is held by the water management authority for nonuse in a critical management area.

(b) The time period for determining the forfeiture of a water right under Section 73-1-4 begins to accrue upon the water management authority's divestiture of its interest in the water right if there was no period of nonuse before the water management authority acquired its interest in the water right.

(c) The time period for determining the forfeiture of a water right under Section 73-1-4 resumes upon the water management authority's divestiture of its interest in the water right if there was a period of nonuse before the water management authority acquired its interest in the water right and no water was used in accordance with the right during the period when the water management authority held the right.

(22) By January 31 of each year, a water management authority shall report to the state engineer and the Board of Water Resources all transactions involving a water right for the previous calendar year.